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ABSTRACT

To examine learning disabled children's intrinsic-extrinsic motivational orientation to their schoolwork, 90 LD students in grades 3-7 were administered the Scale of Instrinsic vs. Extrinsic Orientation in the Classroom and the Perceived Competence Scale for Children. Items were read to the students and a short interview based on the students' responses to the scales followed administration of each of the measures. Results revealed a two-factor solution for the LD sample as compared to the five-factor solution for normal children on the Scale of Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Orientation. It was suggested that the measure needs standardization data for LD students. Additional results supported the prediction that responses of LD Ss would be systematically more extrinsic than those of normal children for both motivational and informational factors. Developmental trends of normal and LD children, however, were similar. Finally, a positive correlation was found between LD Ss' preference for challenge and their traitlike perceptions of cognitive competence, but not their more specific perceptions of their scholastic abilities. Findings suggested that LD Ss may be differentially motivated to learn in school depending upon whether or not they feel they are smart, rather than the extent to which they perceive themselves to be competent at specific academic tasks. (CL)

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Assessing Learning Disabled Children's Motivational Orientations in the Classroom

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Introduction

Much research has been conducted which examines various self-perceptions of learning disabled children. A problem with many of these studies, however, is that researchers use measures which have been standardized for use with normal children and assume that they are also appropriate for use with special populations. A recent study by Renick (1985) showed that the factor structure of the Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982) when used with an LD sample differs from that obtained from normal children. Factor analyses indicate that while normal children tend to differentiate between the Cognitive Competence, Social Acceptance, Physical Competence, and General Self-Worth subscales, LD children combine items from the Cognitive Competence and General Self-Worth subscales to create two new factors. One factor is primarily made up of those items which are more traitlike in nature, while the other factor consists of those items which refer to more concrete manifestations of the child's academic performance.

The present study was designed to examine a related construct, LD children's intrinsic-extrinsic motivational orientation to their schoolwork, and to determine whether Harter's (1981) Scale of Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Orientation in the Classroom needed similar revisions. Five separate dimensions have been defined on this measure by an intrinsic and an extrinsic pole: preference for challenge vs. preference for easy work, curiosity/interest vs. teacher approval, independent mastery attempts vs. dependence on the teacher, independent judgment vs. reliance on the teacher's judgment, and internal vs. external criteria for success/failure. Table 1 shows sample items and the scoring procedure for each of these five subscales.

Table 1

A scale of Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Orientation
in the classroom

Susan Harter

Sample Items and Scoring for Each of the Five Subscales

	Really True for Me	Sort of True for Me	Intrinsic Pole		Extrinsic Pole	Sort of True for Me	Really True for Me
MOTIVATIONAL Subscales			A. Preference for Challenge	vs.	Preference for Easy Work Assigned		
	4	3	Some kids like to go on to new work that's at a more difficult level	but	Other kids would rather stick to the assignments that are pretty easy to do.	2	1
			B. Curiosity/Interest	vs	Pleasing the Teacher/Getting Grades		
	4	3	Some kids read things because they are interested in the subject	but	Other kids read things because the teacher wants them to.	2	1
			C. Independent Mastery	vs.	Dependence on the Teacher		
	4	3	Some kids like to try to figure out how to do assignments on their own	but	Other kids would rather ask the teacher how it should be done.	2	1
COGNITIVE/INFORMATIONAL Subscales			D. Independent Judgment	vs.	Reliance on Teacher's Judgment		
	4	3	Some kids think that they should have a say in what work they do	but	Other kids think that the teacher should decide what work to do.	2	1
			E. Internal Criteria	vs.	External Criteria		
	4	3	Some kids know whether or not they're doing well in school without grades	but	Other kids need to have grades to know how well they are doing in school	2	1

Harter, S. Developmental Psychology, 1981, 17, 300-312.

(Manual available from the author for $9.95).

The study was conducted with four goals in mind. The first goal was to examine the factor structure of the Scale of Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Orientation for learning disabled students to determine the extent to which these children were clustering the items in a manner similar to normal children. Secondly, the study was designed to test the hypothesis that LD children would be more extrinsically oriented in the classroom than are normal children. Given that many LD students are unclear as to the reasons they experience deficits in certain academic areas, it was hypothesized that they may rely more on feedback from their teacher(s) than do normally achieving students and thus evidence more extrinsic scores on the Scale of Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Orientation. Thirdly, a comparison of the developmental trends of LD students' orientations to those obtained for normal children was of interest. The fourth goal of the study was to examine the relationship between LD children's perceptions of cognitive competence as measured by the Perceived Competence Scale for Children and their perceptions of intrinsic-extrinsic orientation in the classroom.

Method

Subjects

Ninety LD children in grades 3-7 participated in this study. All students met Colorado state requirements for placement in a Learning Disabilities program. Placement required evidence of a significant impairment in the child's information processing abilities (ie. failure to attend, follow directions, retain/recall learned information, integrate and apply conceptual skills), the child's IQ being within the normal range, and a 40% discrepancy between academic and performance levels as measured by the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery. Each of these students attended regular classes and were staffed into a Learning Disabilities Resource Room for one hour each day for work with an LD specialist in a small group. Normative data obtained from the Scale of Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Orientation in the Classroom constituted a comparison group.

Procedure

Each student was seen individually while at school. The procedure consisted of administering The Scale of Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Orientation in the Classroom and The Perceived Competence Scale. Items were read to each of the students. A short interview based on the student's responses to the scales followed administration of each of the measures.

Results

The first goal of this study was to examine the factor structure of The Scale of Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Orientation for learning disabled students. The results revealed a two-factor solution for the learning disabled sample as compared to the five-factor solution obtained for normal children. Normal children clearly differentiate the five subscales into separate factors. The two factors obtained from the LD sample corresponded to two higher-order factors found for normal children; one factor from the LD sample consisted primarily of the Preference for Challenge and the Independent Mastery items while the second factor was made up of the Independent Judgment and Internal Criteria items. The items which made up the first factor seem to be more motivational in nature while the Independent Judgment and Internal Criteria items are more cognitive-informational in nature. The items corresponding to the Curiosity/Interest subscale did not systematically load on either factor. The subscales contributing to the Motivational and Informational factors may be seen in Table 1.

Secondly, the study sought to test the hypothesis that LD children would be more extrinsic than are normal children. Figures 1 and 2 show the relationship of LD students' self-perceptions compared to those of normal students for both the Motivational and Informational factors. The results supported the prediction that LD students' responses would be systematically more extrinsic than those of normal children for both factors.

Thirdly, we wanted to determine whether the normative developmental decreases in intrinsic motivation and increases on the cognitive-informational factor would be obtained for LD children. Across grades 3-9, normal

DEVELOPMENTAL TRENDS OF LD AND NORMAL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTRINSIC-EXTRINSIC ORIENTATION BY THE MOTIVATIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL FACTORS

FIGURE 1

MOTIVATIONAL FACTOR

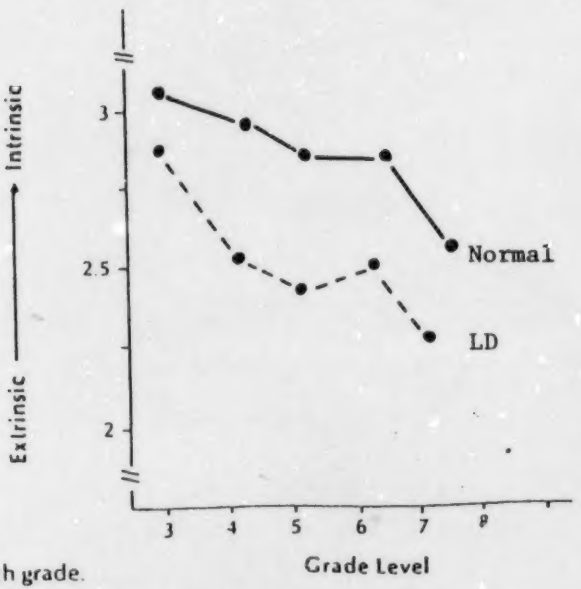
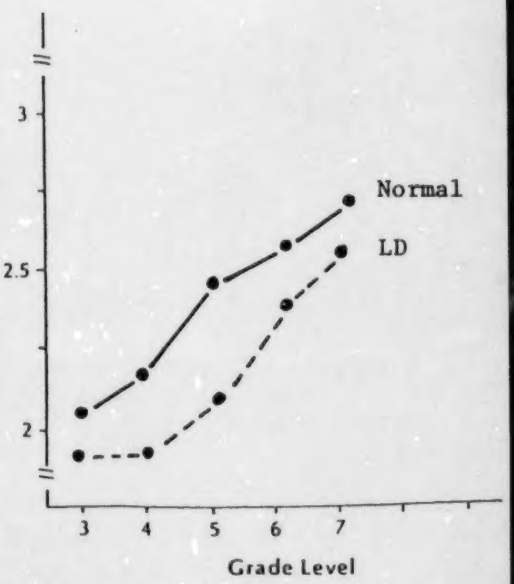


FIGURE 2

INFORMATIONAL FACTOR



Subscale means for each grade.

children's responses on the Preference for Challenge and Independent Mastery subscales become increasingly more extrinsic while their responses on the Independent Judgment and Internal Criteria subscales become increasingly more intrinsic. The findings revealed that the same developmental trends are obtained for the LD sample.

Finally, the relationship between LD children's perceptions of cognitive competence as measured by the Perceived Competence Scale and their perceptions of intrinsic-extrinsic orientation was of interest. A positive correlation was found between LD children's preference for challenge and their traitlike perceptions of cognitive competence ($r = .50$, $p < .0001$), but not their more specific perceptions of their scholastic abilities ($r = .18$). These findings suggest that LD children may be differentially motivated to learn in school depending upon their more traitlike perceptions of cognitive competence rather than their perceptions of competence at specific academic tasks.

Conclusions

The present study indicates several implications for research with LD students:

1. While the LD students in this study did cluster the motivational and informational items in a manner similar that of the sample of normally achieving students, they did not make as fine differentiations among the subscales. These findings suggest that measures need standardization data on the special population of interest for one to be able to meaningfully examine the responses of these children.

2. The results from this study indicate that LD children perceive themselves as being more extrinsically oriented toward their schoolwork than do normally achieving children. Perhaps it is adaptive for LD children to be more extrinsic and thus rely more on their environment in an attempt to compensate for their disabilities.

3. The developmental findings suggest that in studying LD children, we need to be aware of the similarities as well as the differences between LD and nonLD children. While the LD children in this sample were reporting more extrinsic responses to the items on The Scale of Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Orientation than were normally achieving children, as can be seen from Figures 1 and 2, the developmental trends of both groups are similar.

4. Finally, LD children may be differentially motivated to learn in school depending upon whether or not they feel they are smart rather than the extent to which they perceive themselves to be competent at specific academic tasks (i.e. reading comprehension, receptive language skills, etc.)

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